

CASE STUDY: HOMELESSNESS PARTNERSHIP



BACKGROUND

In June 2020, Karim8 was seen rough sleeping in Manchester. He was sat in a doorway eating food out of the bins surrounded by pigeons.

The **Rough Sleeper Support Service** saw that there was a language barrier and found it difficult to find out where Karim had come from and what his care and support needs were.

Over time, Karim started to trust the services he was signposted to such as the homeless drop-in where he accessed food and shelter for the day. No one knew his name, but every time people met him, he grinned and smiled, and when services talked about him, they would ask what do you know about "Smiley"?

Karim was offered temporary accommodation. However, at this time, he was also being offered drugs and was being financially exploited by others. As such, he was in a revolving door of being offered accommodation and then losing his place due to smoking and missing nights sleeping.

A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH

When working with Karim it was clear that his non-negotiable was his need to feel safe. A traumatic and highly adverse environment may lead to anybody to close down to the social world around them. While there are adaptive, protective reasons for adopting this stance, it can leave the person unable to function, in relation to the social environment, in a way that is ultimately beneficial.

The trauma informed training provided the team with the skills and knowledge to have professional curiosity and adapt our approach in light of Karim's trauma responses.

We knew that trauma can be triggered by environmental factors and as such we needed to plan in a trauma informed way prior to meeting him. We did this by ensuring the meetings included someone Karim trusted and someone who spoke his language. This supported Karim to feel no judgement and helped him feel safe.

A range of different services and organisations worked together in a trauma informed way to support Karim. Karim now reports that he is excited and positive about his future.

"Liberation is always in part a storytelling process, breaking stories, breaking silences, making new stories. A free person tells their own story. A valued person lives in a society in which their story has a place." Rebecca Solnit, The Mother of All Questions

*Name has been changed to protect identity



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THE TEAM AROUND KARIM- BASHAR, JULES, DAVE AND PHIL

Jules from the **Anti-Social Behaviour Team (ASBAT)** became involved, although Karim never really seemed to cause any problems. Jules advocated with tenacity for services to put the most appropriate support in place for Karim.

The **language barrier** was difficult as Karim came from Sudan, and he spoke a particular form of Arabic. Eventually Karim was supported by Bashar from Shelter, who spoke Arabic and was able to start to make some sense of what challenges Karim was facing. It was clear that Karim was vulnerable and that he problems with this cognition and mental health.

A turning point came when Karim told Bashar, what his real name was and that he did not like to be called "Smiley" as he had been known as. From this point on he was known to all services by his name, Karim!

A **safeguarding concern** was raised by ASBAT and Shelter due to Karim explaining that he gives his money away, it was clear that he was being financially exploited by others, and it was at this point the Entrenched Rough Sleeper Social Work Team became involved in 2023.

It took three years for the **Care Act (2014) Assessment** to reach Karim! The Care Act Assessment unveiled Karim's story of trauma he experienced in Sudan.



KARIM'S STORY

Karim came into the UK in 2017 after his village in Sudan was taken over by Janjaweed (Sudanese Military). He fled the village but returned with some other survivors to remove the dead from the village to perform funeral rites over a few days, his wife and sister were killed in this attack.

After having to flee from his village, he was arrested at a checkpoint because he had no identification, and it was believed he belonged to the opposition party. So, the police detained and tortured him for several weeks, he was released from prison and was told to report back daily. It was clear his life was in danger, so along with his brother they fled and ended up staying in a mine in a neighbouring village, they stayed hidden for some time.

Eventually Karim and his brother made their way to Libya, where they were forced to work for very little money on a farm. Eventually they save enough money get on a small boat, and they were rescued by the Italian authorities in 2016. They both arrived in France and in the same year arrived in the UK.



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